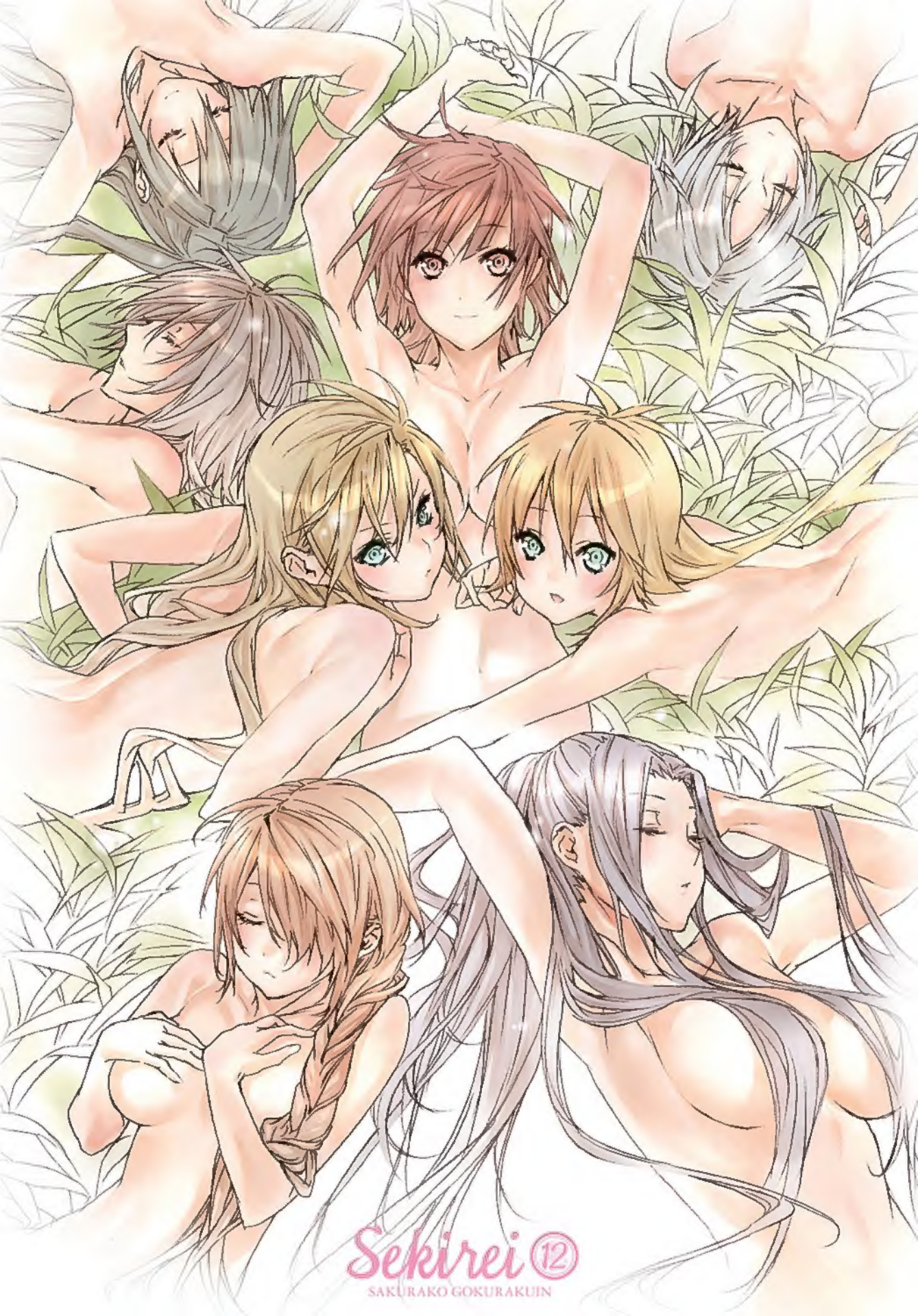
SAKURAKO
GOKURAKUIN


Sekirei 12
SAKURAKO GOKURAKUIN

SEKIREI ⑫

Sakurako Gokurakuin

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Chapter 108: The Demon's Choice

THE DISCI-PLINARY SQUAD ...!?
...BUT WHY...?

LONG TIME NO SEE— SINCE THE THIRD ROUND, RIGHT?
GOOD AFTER-NOON.
OH... NO NEED TO BE ON GUARD.
WE'RE JUST HERE ON BUSINESS TODAY.
THE USUAL WORK FOR MBI, YOU KNOW.

WE'RE HERE TO RETRIEVE THE SEKIREI WHO'VE CEASED TO FUNCTION.
SO PLEASE...
...HAND HER OVER TO US.

FWOOM

FWOOM
FWOOM

TRES-
PASSERS?
WHAT ABOUT HIGA-SAMA?
HE'S IN AN IMPORTANT CONFERENCE AT THE MOMENT. I CAN'T REACH HIM...
YES. GET TO HIYAMA CORP. HOSPITAL QUICKLY...

OF THE TWO SEKIREI WHOM KOCHOU SPOTTED, ONE WAS WITH THE NORTHERN ASHIKABI IN THE THIRD ROUND.
WE HAVE NO DATA ON THE OTHER.
HE WON'T TAKE ANY ACTION ON HIS OWN.
WE'VE NO NEED TO GUARD THAT ONE...
BELIEVE IN YOUR ASHIKABI, IF NO ONE ELSE.
WE'RE SEKIREI, AREN'T WE!?

...BELIEVE IN HER...
YUKARI-SAN...
MY ASHIKABI ...
SHIINA!
I KNOW SHE'S YOUR DARLING LITTLE SIS, SHIINA.
LET'S GIVE IT OUR ALL AND SEARCH FOR KU-CHAN.

CLENCH
YUKARI-SAN...
I...
NO MATTER WHO YOU LIKE...
I...I...
YOUR ASHIKABI IS DIFFERENT.
BUT YOUR CASE IS DIFFERENT, RIGHT?
THAT'S WHY I'M HERE.
...I NEVER HAD A CHOICE, Y'KNOW.
YUKARI-SAN, I...

RING
RING
RING
RING
!!
IT SEEMS TO BE ON HIGA-SAMA'S PRIVATE FLOOR...
TH-THERE'S A FIRE, KAKIZAKI-SAN.
WHAT IS THAT !?
RING
RING
RING

WHAT...IS THIS...?
...WHAT ...?
SHIINA!!
...SAN.....
YUKARI .....
DASH
SLAM
OF COURSE.
IT'S IN HER ROOM...!

THE DEMON... ASHIKABI ...!
H-HE... HIGA-SAMA'S IN AN IMPORTANT MEETING...
HMPH. REALLY? SHOW'S HOW MUCH I'M WORTH TO HIM.
... WHERE'S HIGA?
THE GIRL HE'S ITCHING TO MARRY IS WREATHED IN FLAME, SO WHY HASN'T HE COME RUNNING?
...DID YOU START THIS FIRE YOURSELF?
'COS I'M PRETTY SURE IMPRISONING A POOR LITTLE GIRL LIKE ME...
RIGHT BACK AT YA.
THAT'S A CRIME, YOU KNOW.
...AIN'T EXACTLY LEGAL.
RIGHT?

FWOOM
!!
SMASH
RIGHT.
I'M OUTTA HERE.
GIVE THAT GUY A MESSAGE FOR ME.
WE'RE ON THE 50TH FLOOR!!
D—
DON'T DO IT!!

HANDSOME OR NOT, THAT OLD DUDE NEVER STOOD A CHANCE.
SO, SEE YA.
TRUTH IS, I PREFER... HOW DO I PUT THIS?
I LIKE YOUNG BOYS!! I'M A PERV!!
IT'LL BE OKAY.
HEY—
THERE'S ALWAYS SOMEONE THERE TO SAVE ME.
WHENEVER I GET MYSELF INTO A REALLY TIGHT SPOT, HE'S...
YUKARI-SAN...

FLOAT
HUMAN OR SEKIREI...
IT DOESN'T MATTER.
I LIKE YOU, SHIINA.
YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE FOR ME—!

NO. 10, IF YOU WILL...
...MINATO SAHASHI-SAN.

Chapter 109: Far-Off Hopes

Chapter 109: Far-Off Hopes

SIMPLY-DRAWN SEKIREI

...WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO WITH HER...?
WITH UZUME-SAN...?

ANYWAY, WHAT HAPPENS TO HER NOW IS A COMPANY SECRET, BUT...
WELL, YOU ARE RELATED TO AN EMPLOYEE.
HEH-HEH... TRUTH IS... WE ACTUALLY JUST CAME AS NATSUO'S BODYGUARDS...
BENI-TSU-BASA.
KEEP IT PROFES-SIONAL!
SO STOP PISSING ME OFF!
WE WEREN'T PLANNING TO MAKE TROUBLE THIS TIME.
ALL YOU GOTTA DO IS HAND OVER NO. 10 !!
SHAD-DUP!
I SUSPECT YOU KNOW THE NATURE OF WHAT'S GOT HER OCCUPIED, ACTUALLY.
...THAT IS, CHIEF SAHASHI. BUT SHE'S TIED UP WITH OTHER BUSINESS AT THE MOMENT.
THIS "RETRIEVAL" WORK IS ORDINARILY CONDUCTED BY MY SUPERIOR.
YEAH, I ASKED HER TO WORK ON CURING CHIHO-SAN...
...! UZUME-SAN'S ASHIKABI—
YOU SHOULD THANK THE CEO.
THOUGH IT'S MOSTLY BECAUSE OF HIS GRUDGE AGAINST THAT OPPOSING CORPORATION.

...AND THEN SENT TO A SPECIAL FACILITY.
DEPENDING ON THE DAMAGE LEVEL, THEY'RE GIVEN SURGICAL TREATMENT...
THEY'RE STILL LIVING BEINGS, SO IT'S NOT LIKE THEY'VE EXACTLY CONQUERED "DEATH," BUT...
—ANYHOW, SEKIREI WHO'VE CEASED TO FUNCTION...
NO. 10 IS STILL ALIVE.
THERE, THEY CONTINUE TO SLEEP.
IN OTHER WORDS...
AS WE WASTE TIME TALKING HERE, SHE'S INCHING CLOSER AND CLOSER TOWARD TRUE DEATH.
BUT SHE ISN'T LOOKING TOO GOOD.
UZUME-SAN IS... ALIVE...!
.....IT REALLY DOESN'T TAKE MUCH THOUGHT TO DECIDE WHAT YOU OUGHT TO DO NOW, DOES IT?
SO WHILE I HATE TO INTERRUPT SUCH AN EMOTIONAL SCENE...

...UZUME
...
...HAS LEFT US, HAS SHE...?

FOR SEKIREI, A VANISHED CREST...
...IS THE SAME AS DEATH.
...NO.
MIYA .....
...LAND-LADY...
UZUME-SAN!
SHE'S ALIVE— HE SAID SO...
B-BUT SHE'S ALIVE!
THE GIRL WE ALL KNEW...
UZUME, WHO LIVED HERE WITH US...
.....IS TRULY GONE AND LOST FOREVER.

IT CAN'T BE...
HE SAID SHE'S ALIVE ...
SHE'S JUST GONNA SLEEP AT SOME FACILITY FOR A B—
KAGARI-SAN.
YOU HAD ME HOLD ON TO THIS...
...BECAUSE YOU KNEW THIS MIGHT HAPPEN.
THIS RELIC OF DESTINY FROM AGES PAST...
SEKIREI AND ASHIKABI HAVE ALWAYS FOUGHT OVER THEM...
STEEPED IN BLOOD...AND GRIEF.....

THE JINKI.....

LAND-LADY...?
JUST... WHO ARE YOU.....?
LOST BONDS...
IF YOU WISH TO RETRIEVE THEM...
...THERE IS BUT ONE WAY.
!
...HOPE.
SINCE THE AGE OF GODS, HOPE IS ALL THAT REMAINS WHEN CALAMITY STRIKES.
...SAHASHI-SAN...
...DO YOU HAVE THE COURAGE NECESSARY TO ACCEPT YOUR FATE?

Chapter 110: The Girls' Return

HOPE.
SINCE THE AGE OF GODS, HOPE IS ALL THAT REMAINS WHEN CALAMITY STRIKES.
...SAHASHI-SAN...
...DO YOU HAVE THE COURAGE NECESSARY TO ACCEPT YOUR FATE?
LOST BONDS... RETRIEVING THEM...
THE COURAGE TO ACCEPT .....
LOST.....

BADUM
BADUM
BADUM

I... I DON'T...
...HAVE ANY...
... COURAGE.
WHEN UZUME-SAN LAY THERE UNCONSCIOUS...
WHEN MBI TOOK HER AWAY...
...I WAS SO SCARED, I COULDN'T DO ANY-THING.
THINKING THAT... EVERYONE MIGHT...
RUMBLE
...SOMEDAY...
EVERY-ONE...

"I MIGHT LOSE EVERYONE, JUST LIKE THAT."
THAT'S ALL I COULD THINK.

I'M SO SCARED ...
JUST THINKING OF LOSING EVERY-ONE...
...SCARES ME SO MUCH.
MINATO-KUN...
SA-HASHI-SAN.
YOUR HONESTY... YOUR STRAIGHT-FORWARD AFFECTION TOWARD YOUR SEKIREI...
...I JUST CAN'T HELP...
...BUT BE REMINDED OF TAKEHITO-SAN.....
...N!
...TO-SAAAN!

MINATO-
SAAAN!

THUD
BWUH!
UNH .....
OOOH, MINATO-SAN! MINATO-SAAAN!
I'M REALLY NOT GOOD AT LANDINGS...
S—
SORRY ABOUT THAT!
ARE YOU OKAY?
...MUSUBI-CHAN.

KU-CHAN!
BIG BROTHER! ♡
GAHHH!!
POP
WHEEZE
I UNDERSTAND THAT WE WERE PURSUED BY THE EAST'S LACKEYS, BUT DID WE REALLY NEED TO USE THE SEWERS...?
WE MANAGED TO SNEAK IN THE SHADOWS AND RETURN HOME WITHOUT A BATTLE...!
KU-FU-FU...IT WAS A BRILLIANT SCHEME PLAYING ON THE ACCEPTED PREJUDICE THAT SEKIREI PRIMARILY UTILIZE THE SKIES FOR TRAVEL!

TSUKI-UMI!
MATSU-SAN!
YOU'VE ALL...
...COME HOME...
...SAFELY...
NO SIGNAL
WHAT HAP-PENED HERE, MINA-TAN?
WE WERE UNDERGROUND, SO I COULDN'T GET A READING ON THE SITUATION UP HERE...!
AH!! DON'T TELL ME YOU'VE BEEN INJURED!?
MINATO, WHOSE BLOOD IS THAT?
WEEP
MINATO-SAN?
WH-WHAT IS IT, MINATO?
WHERE DOES IT HURT!?

HUG
はっ
!
MINA—

MI—
MINATO-SAN??

ST—
STOP THIS AT ONCE!
I'VE JUST EMERGED FROM THE SEWERS. I-I'M SURE I SMELL FOUL.
MINA—
R-RELEASE ME.

SQUEEZE
ぎゅっ…
…MINATO……?
UZUME…WAS TERMINATED.
!!
SHE WAS DONE IN BY THE EAST'S SEKIREI…
…SORRY… IT'S ALL MY FAULT.

YOU GUYS WERE OUT THERE TRYING SO HARD, BUT...
...I COULDN'T PROTECT UZUME...OUR FRIEND.
...I'M SORRY...
BIG BROTH-ER.
IS U-CHAN GONE? IS SHE DEAD?
IS SHE?
UZUME IS...?
KU-CHAN...
SHE'S NOT DEAD...
UZUME-SAN ISN'T DEAD.
...LAND-LADY?
ISN'T THAT RIGHT...

...HAVE FINALLY STIRRED ME TO ACTION.
IT SEEMS... ...YOU BUNCH...
...I CAN'T HELP BUT WANT TO REACH OUT AND LEND A HAND.
BUT SEEING HOW PURELY YOU ALL CARE FOR EACH OTHER...
WHEN TAKEHITO-SAN PASSED...
...I INTENDED TO RETIRE FOR GOOD...
LAND-LADY-SAMA ...?

I AM SEKIREI NO. 01...
...MIYA.
AND—
I AM NEITHER HUMAN NOR SEKIREI.

I'LL TELL YOU EVERY-THING.

THE BLOOD-STAINED TRUTH...
...ABOUT SEKIREI AND ASHIKABI.

I AM NEITHER HUMAN NOR SEKIREI.
AND—
I AM SEKIREI NO. 01, MIYA.
I'LL TELL YOU EVERY-THING.
THE BLOOD-STAINED TRUTH... ABOUT SEKIREI AND ASHIKABI.

Chapter 111: White Wings' Pledge

SEKIREI .....?
LAND-LADY...
THIS ISN'T A STORY TO BE TOLD STANDING OUTSIDE.
...YOU ALL NEED A BATH AND A MEAL! ♡
...BUT...
...BEFORE THAT... EVERY-ONE...
... HUH?
...IT'S GOING TO BE A LONG ONE.....
BECAUSE I SUSPECT...

...SEKIREI...
...NO... O1...
TSUKIUMI-SAN! MATSU!
D-DO WE REALLY SMELL THAT BADLY?
TREATING US LIKE A COUPLE OF DIRTY RATS...!
YOU TWO WILL ENTER THROUGH THE BACK DOOR AND PROCEED STRAIGHT TO THE BATH!
TWITCH
...OH. RIGHT.

...MINATO-SAN.
AHAHA HAHAHA!
KYAHH!

I'M SURE WE'LL SEE UZUME-SAN AGAIN, SOMEDAY.
AND ON THAT DAY...
...UZUME-SAN AND...HER ASHIKABI...
...AND ALL OF US...
...HERE AT IZUMO INN...

...WILL BE TOGETHER AGAIN!

AND ALL THE SEKIRE! WITH BROKEN WINGS...
I'LL RELEASE THEM INTO THE SKY ONCE AGAIN. THEY'LL BE FREE.

...I WILL ABSOLUTELY BEAT HER.

SQUEEZE
BUT... NOW...
...YEAH.
BACK THEN...
THE WEIGHT OF THAT... THE PAIN... I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND IT AT ALL.
...THE TRUE MEANING OF WHAT MUSUBI-CHAN SAID...ABOUT "SURVIVING THE BATTLE"...
I'VE GOT TO GET STRONGER.
FOR ALL OF THEM, WHO BELIEVE IN ME.
WE'LL SEE UZUME-SAN AGAIN.
IN ORDER TO PROTECT THEM.
FOR SURE—!

HOW MANY WERE TERMINATED TODAY, I WONDER...
HMM.

I CAN'T WAIT UNTIL IT'S JUST US TWO. UNTIL THE BLOODBATH WE'LL HAVE.
... HURRY.
MU-CHAN...
MY BLOOD'S REALLY FLOWING.

WHAT IS IT, MUSUBI?
MUSUBI ...
...WON'T LOSE!!

SNIFF
SNIFF
CLINK

SORRY... I...
IF ONLY I'D TAKEN DOWN THE EAST'S SEKIREI PROPERLY, THEN UZUME—
KAGARI-SAN!
UZUME-SAN...
SHE WAS HOLDING BACK AFTER ALL.
STICK
TH-THANK YOU.
SHOULDN'T NEED STITCHES.
YOU LOST A LOT OF BLOOD, BUT...
...THE WOUNDS THEMSELVES WERE THANKFULLY PRETTY SHALLOW.
NO...! YOU'RE WRONG.
IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT.
IT'S NOT THE FAULT OF ANY SEKIREI.
HUMANS ARE THE ONLY ONES TO BLAME.
HUMANS WHO INTERFERE WITH THE BATTLE BETWEEN SEKIREI FOR THEIR OWN SELFISH REASONS.

S-SORRY, SORRY! WAH!
THAT'S OKAY...
JUMP
THAT... KINDA HURTS.
SQUEEZE
SAHASHI...
I MEAN...I WAS CERTAIN ALL THE SINGLE NUMBERS WERE AWARE OF THAT...
YOU KNEW THAT LANDLADY-DONO WAS NO. 01—!?
WHA—?

NOW THEN, EVERYONE...
THE FOOD IS READY.
HELP ME SERVE IT, PLEASE.
SO YOU'RE LIKE A QUEEN?
QU-QUEEN !?
OKAAAY.
MUSUBI DIDN'T KNOW EITHER
HUH... WAS THE ONLY ONE IN THE DARK
HEY, HEY, MIYA-CHAN.
U-FU-FU. WHAT IS IT?
FU-FU. YES, I AM.
ARE YOU REALLY NO. 01, MIYA-CHAN?

NOW, WHY WOULD YOU THINK THAT?
BECAUSE, BECAUSE, TAKAMI-CHAN TOLD ME...
...THAT NO. 01 IS THE QUEEN OF ALL SEKIREI.
I SUP-POSE SO...
BUT RATHER THAN "QUEEN," I WOULD SAY—
PER-HAPS.
GOD-DESS.
GODDESS —!!
OOOH!
AS I SAID...
...I AM NEITHER HUMAN NOR SEKIREI.

...OF MEMORIES ONLY I POSSESS...
...LINKING US TO A DISTANT PAST...
LET ME TELL YOU...
...OF THE AGE OF GODS, UNKNOWN TO ALL BUT ME.

THE ORIGIN STORY...
...OF BOTH ASHIKABI AND SEKIREI—!

BEFORE WE BEGIN...
...LET ME SAY ONE THING.
TWITCH
KAGARI-SAN.
WH-WHAT?
COME TO THINK OF IT, YOU DID HAND IT OVER TO THE LAND-LADY.....
POINT
YOU SIMPLY MUST STOP USING ME AS YOUR JINKI SAFE-KEEPER!
NO, I... IT'S JUST, I KNEW IT'D BE SAFEST WITH YOU, MIYA.
...RIGHT?

Chapter 112: The Original Ashikabi

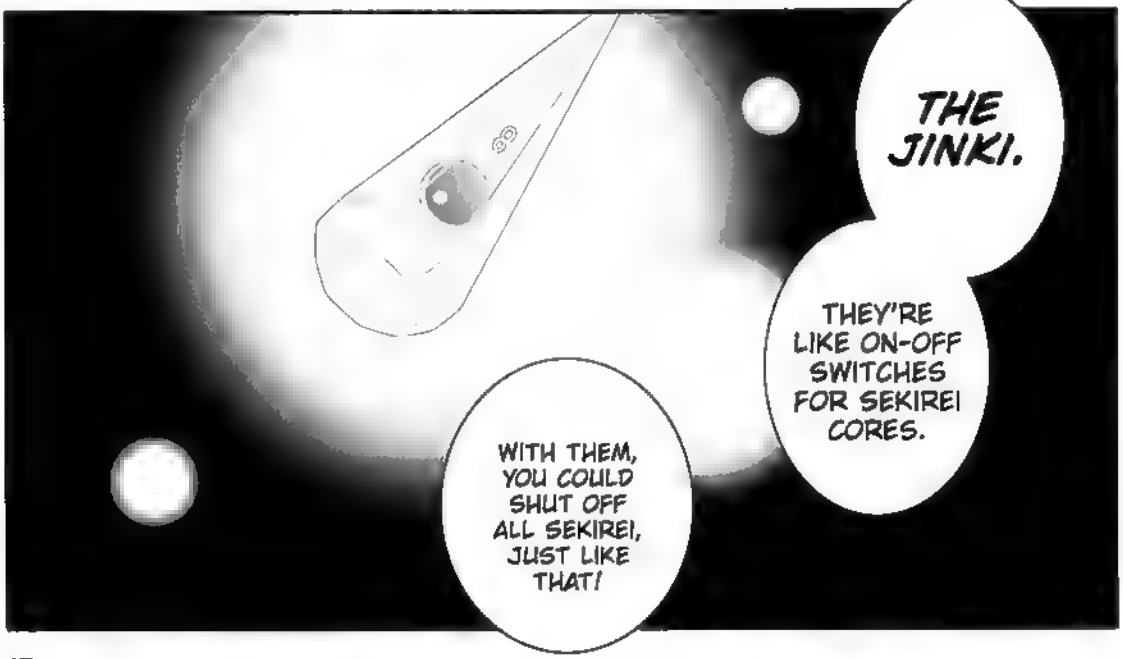
WE HAVE TWO OF THEM HERE, BUT...
...ONE MUST POSSESS ALL EIGHT TO USE THEM.
CLUNK
THE JINKI.
SAHASHI-SAN, ANY IDEAS?
AS FOR WHAT HAPPENS WHEN ALL EIGHT ARE BROUGHT TOGETHER ...
NO...
MBI DIDN'T EXPLAIN ANYTHING ABOUT THEM...
AN ASHIKABI IN POSSESSION OF ALL EIGHT JINKI...
...CAN FORCE ALL OTHER SEKIREI TO CEASE FUNCTIONING.
WHEN THE EIGHT ARE LINKED TOGETHER, A CONTRACT-BEARING ASHIKABI CAN CAUSE A CERTAIN PHENOMENON TO OCCUR.
JINKI ARE MADE OF A MATERIAL THAT REACTS WITH SEKIREI *CORES.*
THAT IS TO SAY...
OOH?

AWW. SHE'S GONE AND SAID IT...
R-RIGHT.
MATSU-SAN. COULD YOU ELABORATE?
FORCE THEM...
...TO CEASE ...
YOU ALL KNOW SEKIREI HAVE "SEKIREI CORES" WITHIN THEM.
THEY'RE THE SOURCE OF OUR POWER.
THEY'RE OUR VERY LIVES, ESSENTIALLY.
SO...
A SEKIREI WHO'S LOST HIS OR HER CORE WILL CEASE TO FUNCTION.
IT'S NO GOOD, YUME.
THIS ONE'S CORE IS TOTALLY DESTROYED.

THIS ONE'S NO USE TO US ANYMORE!

WHAT'S WRONG?
MUSUBI JUST HAD A VISION OF KARASUBA-SAMA!
YEAH, WHAT IS IT, MUSUBI?

...MU-CHAN?
AH!


THE JINKI.
THEY'RE LIKE ON-OFF SWITCHES FOR SEKIREI CORES.
WITH THEM, YOU COULD SHUT OFF ALL SEKIREI, JUST LIKE THAT!

...AND CALL THEM PRIZES...?
...GIVE OUT... THOSE SCARY THINGS...
WHY WOULD THE CEO...
BUT AS IT IS...
...THERE ARE SOME ASHIKABI OUT THERE...
...WHO'LL DO WHATEVER IT TAKES TO GET THEM!
NO. OF COURSE NOT...
WELL, I'M NOT LAUGH-ING!
CALLING THEM "PRIZES ♡" IS JUST THE CEO'S IDEA OF A JOKE...
THAT'S WHAT I SUSPECT.
...CAN BE SHUT OFF...SO EASILY ...!?
OUR SEKIREI CORES ...
AND IT'S NOT EXACTLY A LIE. THEY ARE "PRIZES ♡" OF A SORT.
HOW-EVER...
THAT IS ONLY ONE SMALL PIECE OF THE OVERALL TRAGEDY.

THE REAL PROB-LEM...
...WILL SOON BECOME CLEAR...

BUT BEFORE WE GET TO THAT...
IT'S TIME FOR A TALE OF DAYS LONG PAST.

SAHA-SHI-SAN.
Y-YES?

THE ORIGIN STORY...
...OF SEKIREI AND ASHIKABI.

THE STORY OF ALL SEKIREI.

UNKNOWN EVEN TO THEM—

THIS IS YOUR STORY.

AS AN ASHIKABI, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO SEE IT.

YOU CAN PEER INTO MY MEMORIES.

THIS IS YOUR STORY.
YOU CAN PEER INTO MY MEMORIES.
AS AN ASHIKABI, YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO SEE IT.

THE STORY OF ALL SEKIREI.
UNKNOWN EVEN TO THEM—

FOUND THEM!?
NO. NOT OVER HERE.
THEY'RE TOO GOOD AT HIDE-AND-SEEK!
CAN'T FIIIND THEM!
NO FAAAIR. BIG SIS WANTS SOME LOVING TOOOO.
GEEZ...
SINCE WE HAVEN'T SEEN HER REACTION LIGHT YET, THAT MEANS THEY HAVEN'T JOINED...
KU-FU-KU-FU. I WONDER HOW LONG THEY CAN HOLD OUT.
GETTING THE JUMP ON ME...!!
GETTING THE JUMP ON ME...
RUSTLE
GETTING THE JUMP ON MEEE!
WHOA, CALM DOWN.

I-IS THIS REALLY OKAY...?
SHE SEEMS PRETTY ANGRY.
SHH.
YOU TWO!
I WON'T FORGET THIS!
FU-FU.
THEY'VE LEFT! ♡
....IS THIS REALLY OKAY...?
WHOA!
=KISS= ♡
ST-STOP THAT! THEY'LL FIND US!
IT WAS JUST A LITTLE PECK. WE'LL BE FINE!
SEE? ♡
MY SEKIREI CREST ISN'T EVEN GLOWING! ♡

GIGGLE
I GUESS...
...I REALLY DID GET THE JUMP ON HER. ♡
WE'RE FINE FOR TODAY!
I HAVEN'T CAUGHT THEIR SCENT YET.
WE HAVE TO GO BACK SOON.
...NO TELLING WHEN THEY'LL ATTACK...
MMM!
WHAT A BEAUTIFUL DAY!
EVERY-ONE'S GONE AND LEFT US.
BE-SIDES ...
GLOMP
WHOA!
WH-WHOA!
HOLD ON... WHERE ARE YOUR CLOTHES!?

MMM...

I WILL PROTECT YOU.

FOREVER AND EVER...

...I WILL PROTECT YOU...

...MY ASHIKABI.

I WILL PROTECT YOU.
FOREVER AND EVER...
...I WILL PROTECT YOU...

...MY ASHIKABI.

...I SEE IT.
DARK CLOUDS.
FLOWING BLOOD.
THE TEARS OF MY SISTERS ...

Chapter 113: Blood of Yore

THAT DAY...
EIGHT STARS FELL FROM THE SKY.
.....
.....SAMA.
ONE'S COMING THIS WAY!
EEK!

ASHIKABI-SAMA.
RUMBLE
...
...SAMA
...
THAT VOICE... IT'S CALLING ME...?
...WHAT...?
WHAT IS THAT...?
BOOM
SOMEONE'S CALLING ME—!
MY HEART'S POUNDING.
HEY, IT'S DANGER-OUS!

...FOUND YOU.
FOUND YOU!
MY ASHIKABI.
OUR DESTINED PARTNER.

WE'RE...
...SEKIREI!
...
SEKI...
...REI...

AMAZING —!
SO WE REALLY DO HAVE AN ASHIKABI...
YAAAY, BIG BROTHER!
NO, WAIT. LET'S GET A BETTER LOOK AT HIM...
OOH, I THINK I LIKE HIM. ♡
THIS ASHIKABI IS A MERE APE.
LOOK AT HIM! LOOK AT HIS DUMB-FOUNDED FACE!
PRELIMINARY CALCULATIONS STATED THE ODDS OF ONE OF THE SPECIES ON THIS PLANET MANIFESTING ASHIKABI ABILITIES WERE ONLY ONE IN TEN THOUSAND...
KU-FU-KU-FU-FU-FU. EXPERIMENT! I MUST RUN AN EXPERI-MENT...
WRIGGLE WRIGGLE
わきわきわ
THOSE ONE IN TEN THOUSAND ODDS ARE EVEN MORE INCREDIBLE, GIVEN THE CURRENT ERA.
.....
EIGHT ARKS HAVE FALLEN TO THE EARTH.
EACH CONTAIN 107 "SEKIRE" AND ONE "PILLAR."
MY ARK BURNED, AND THE REGALIA CONTAINED WITHIN WERE LOST IN THE FLAMES.
ONLY THESE EIGHT AND I SURVIVED...

THAT IS A FATE THAT HUMANS—BEING WHAT THEY ARE—CANNOT AVOID.....
THERE IS NO DOUBT THIS WILL TRIGGER CONFLICT.
TO BOND WITH A SEKIREI IS TO ACQUIRE THE POWER OF THE GODS.
THEIR POWERS OF YORE WILL BOND THEM TO THE SEKIREI SCATTERED THROUGHOUT THE LANDS...
LOW THOUGH THE ODDS MAY BE, OTHER ASHIKABI MAY YET APPEAR.
THERE ARE EIGHT IN TOTAL.
BRINGING ALL TOGETHER GRANTS THE POWER TO MOVE HEAVEN AND EARTH.
ALSO...
...EACH PILLAR POSSESSES ONE OF THESE.
THE "KUSHIMITAMA."
...AND THIS "SOUL" ARE YOURS TO TAKE...
...THEN MY SEKIREI ...
IF YOU POSSESS THE DETERMINATION TO ACCEPT YOUR FATE...
SO...
I HOLD OURS IN MY HANDS—THE LAST BIT OF OUR REGALIA.
THE KUSHIMITAMA RULE OVER THE SOULS OF ALL SEKIREI.

...MY YOUNG "ASHIKABI."
UMM... UHH...
UMM...
...
...YOU PUT SOME CLOTHES ON? PLEASE...!
HOW ABOUT, FIRST...
...UH.
ON THAT DAY...
...GLOWING ARKS FELL FROM THE SKY.
AND I FOUND MYSELF WITH EIGHT WIVES.

...SAN.
SAHASHI-SAN.
WH-WH-WH-WH-WH-WHY'M I NAKED ...?
HUH...? WH-WHERE ARE WE...!?
IN THE REALM OF YOUR SUBCON-SCIOUS.
WHOA!
YOU SAW THEM, DIDN'T YOU? THOSE OLDEST OF MEMORIES.
MEMORIES OF THE ORIGINAL ASHIKABI AND SEKIREI ARE CARVED INTO YOUR DNA.

AND 108... THAT'S THE NUMBER OF SEKIREI...
WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT !?
O-OH, BUT WAIT! THOSE GIRLS LOOKED LIKE ALL OF YOU...

FROM "TAKAMA-GA-HARA"... NO.
IT WAS FROM "KOUTEN" THAT THE EIGHT ARKS DEPARTED.

THE ORIGINAL ASHIKABI...

BUT *THIS ME* WAS STILL ASLEEP IN THAT ERA.
THE ONE YOU SAW WAS ONE OF THOSE EIGHT.
THE EIGHT PILLARS WERE *ME*.
EACH CONTAINED 107 SEKIREI AND ONE PILLAR.

I WAS AT THE BOTTOM OF A DEEP SEA...
...WITH MY 107.
IN A LONG, LONG SLEEP.

THEY WERE BOTH HUMANS WITH THE APTITUDE TO BECOME ASHIKABI.
THAT'S WHY THE DOORS OF MY ARK RESPONDED TO THEM AND OPENED.
YOU SEE...
...UNLIKE THE OTHERS, MY ARK MISTAKENLY FELL INTO THE OCEAN. ♡
TIME PASSED.
THE VESSEL EVENTUALLY ROSE UP WITH AN ISLAND AND WAS DISCOVERED BY A CERTAIN PAIR...
...SO THAT WAS—
KAMIKURA ISLAND...
THE SEKIREI WITHIN THE EIGHT ARKS ALL HAD DIFFERENT GROWTH RATES, BUT THEY ALL RESEMBLE EACH OTHER.
I BELIEVE THAT'S WHY THOSE GIRLS FROM THE MEMORIES APPEARED TO YOU AS SPITTING IMAGES OF MUSUBI-SAN AND THE OTHERS.
IN YOUR CASE, SAHASHI-SAN, THE MEMORIES YOU VIEWED WERE SEEN THROUGH A "FILTER" OF YOUR OWN EXPERIENCES.
AS FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO US NEXT...
YOU'RE ALREADY QUITE FAMILIAR WITH THE STORY.

AND THAT LAST ONE ACTUALLY WAS ME.
ONE OF THE EIGHT PILLARS, LOST LONG AGO.
I WILL NOW TELL YOU...
...OF ALL THAT MY EYES WERE WITNESS TO...

HELLO!
WE'RE BAAACK!

EH-HEH-HEH. ♡ I WAS OUT PLAYING WITH OUR ASHIKABI-SAMA.
SHUFFLE SHUFFLE SHUFFLE
THAT'S WHY I'M LATE GETTING B—
BONK
ACK! ☆
AND WHAT IF THE ENEMY CAUGHT SIGHT OF YOUR REACTION LIGHT!!?
YOU MAY AS WELL HAVE ANNOUNCED THAT OUR ASHIKABI LIVES HERE!!
AWWW, I'M SORRYYY...!
YOU!
GETTING THE JUMP ON ME IN SECRET ONCE AGAIN.
YOU HIT ME WITH A BRONZE MIRROR...
DOING WHO-KNOWS-WHAT WITH OUR ASHIKABI —!!

MY, MY, BUT THE BUSINESS OF LOVE IS A PRECIOUS THING! ♡
KU-KU-KU-KU. EXPERIMENT! ♡ EXPERIMENT! ♡♡
CUT IT OUT. I DON'T WANNA HEAR ABOUT...
...ALL THE "WHO-KNOWS-WHAT"!
HEY, HEEEY, WHERE'S BIG BROTHER? ♡
HUH? HE WAS WITH ME UNTIL A MOMENT AGO.
GAH!
YOU MEAN HE'S RUN AWAY !!?

NO MOVEMENT FROM THE ENEMY. YET.
BUT WHEN THE FIGHTING STARTS, IT'LL ALL HAPPEN IN A FLASH.
THE VILLAGE WILL BURN, THE FIELDS WILL BE RAVAGED, AND PEOPLE WILL DIE.
WHAT'S THE SITU-ATION?
YOU'RE THE ONLY GUY WHO CAN PROTECT US FROM ALL THAT!
MY DEAR ASHIKABI-CHAN!

Chapter 114: Kushimitama's Whereabouts

—HERE THEY COME!

PLEASE, EVERYONE...
...JUST COME BACK SAFELY...!

WE'LL BE FINE!

BECAUSE WE...
...WON'T LOSE!

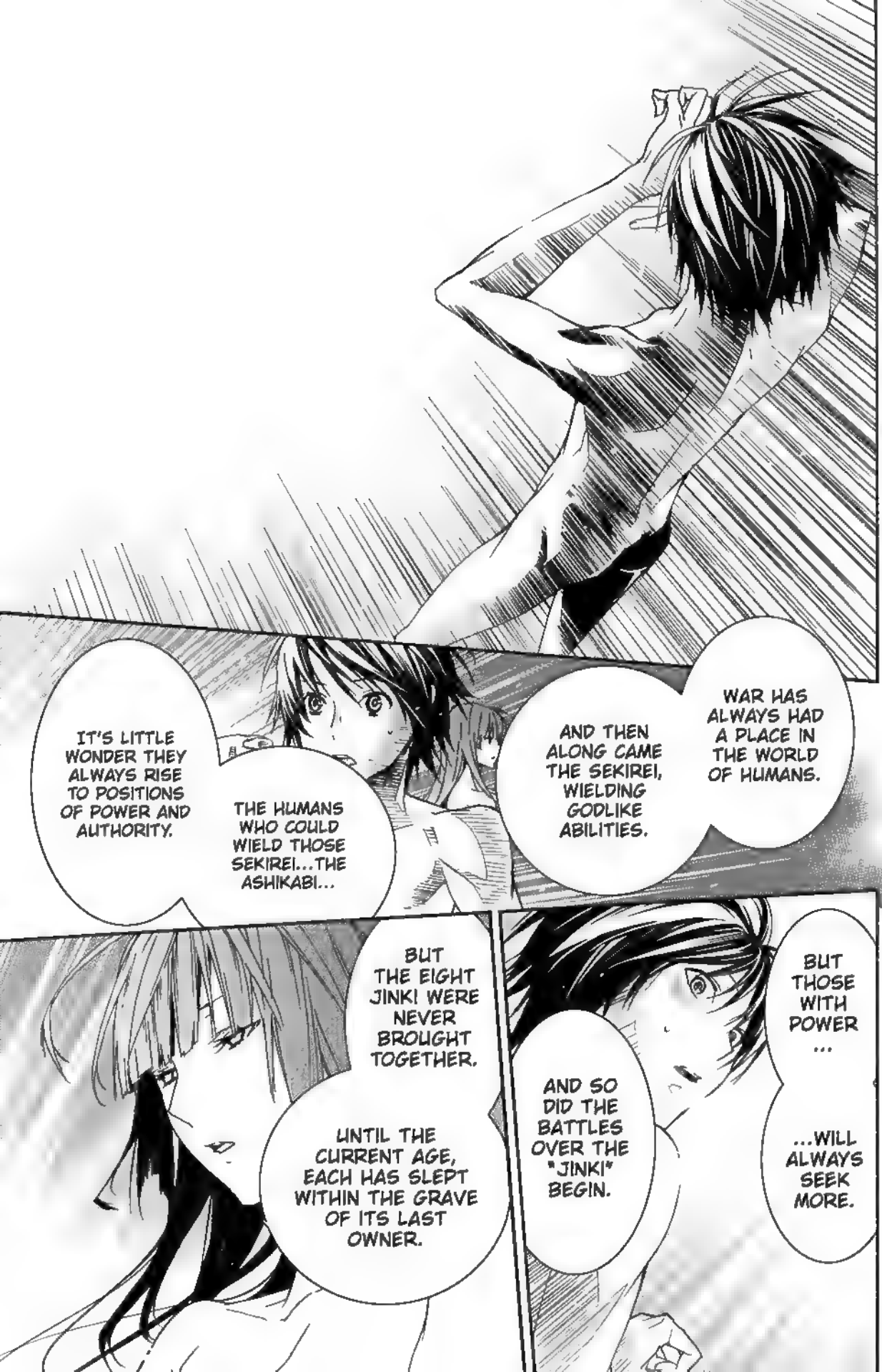
CLENCH
THIS WILL BE DANGER-OUS.
SO PLEASE, MOVE OUT OF...
...THE WAY!!

GROW!

HEH HEH.
WE CAN'T AFFORD TO LOSE HERE EITHER.
RIGHT?
STAY ON GUARD, EVERYONE.

THE REAL BATTLE...
...STARTS NOW.
FOOM
...!!
TCH...

HERE I COME!
CLASH


WAR HAS ALWAYS HAD A PLACE IN THE WORLD OF HUMANS.
AND THEN ALONG CAME THE SEKIREI, WIELDING GODLIKE ABILITIES.
THE HUMANS WHO COULD WIELD THOSE SEKIREI...THE ASHIKABI...
IT'S LITTLE WONDER THEY ALWAYS RISE TO POSITIONS OF POWER AND AUTHORITY.
BUT THOSE WITH POWER ...
...WILL ALWAYS SEEK MORE.
AND SO DID THE BATTLES OVER THE "JINKI" BEGIN.
BUT THE EIGHT JINKI WERE NEVER BROUGHT TOGETHER.
UNTIL THE CURRENT AGE, EACH HAS SLEPT WITHIN THE GRAVE OF ITS LAST OWNER.

...AS WELL AS THEIR ASHIKABI...
THE SEKIREI WHO SURVIVED THE BATTLES...
SO THE ASHIKABI BLOODLINES HAVE PERSISTED TO THIS DAY.
...BORE CHILDREN OF THEIR OWN.
THEY LEFT BEHIND DESCEN-DANTS.
YES, THAT'S WHAT I SAID.
DESCEN-DANTS!?
DESCEN-DANTS...
ASHIKABI ...
SEKIREI ...
...MAY BE DUE TO THE INFLUENCE OF THEIR DISTANT ANCESTORS.
NOT EVERY DESCENDANT EXHIBITS THE APTITUDE TO BE AN ASHIKABI, OF COURSE...
...BUT THE FACT THAT SO MANY ASHIKABI TODAY COME FROM POWERFUL FAMILIES...

...DESCEND FROM SEKIRE! .....?
...SO I...
NOW LET'S TALK ABOUT THE JINKI.
.....
LET THE THIRD PHASE BEGIN!
...WHO REVIVED THEM IN MODERN TIMES.
NEEDLESS TO SAY, IT WAS MBI...
AND IT WAS I WHO GAVE THEM THE NECESSARY INFORMATION TO DO SO.
THE PRIZE? THESE "JINKI"!!
THERE'RE REALLY THINGS LIKE THAT!?
WHERE? WHERE?
LET'S EXCAVATE!
WOW! WOW! "JINKI"!?
LET'S INVESTI-GATE!

ROAR
OF COURSE, I NEVER IMAGINED THEY'D BE USED AS PRIZES IN THIS FOOLISH GAME.
FU FU...
L-LAND-LADY!
WHAT'S THAT BEHIND YOU, LAND-LADY!!?
SHUDDER
...!?
...WAIT.
...NO..... BUT...
HOLD ON A MINUTE ...
IF TODAY'S ASHIKABI ARE DESCENDED FROM SEKIREI...
NO...EVEN IF THEY'RE NOT ASHIKABI...
THEN...FROM WHAT YOU'VE SAID...THE HUMANS ALIVE NOW WHO'VE INHERITED THE GENES OF THOSE ANCIENT SEKIREI ARE...
"KUSHI-MITAMA"...
THE JINKI RESPOND TO SEKIREI CORES.
AND A SEKIREI'S CORE IS THE SOURCE OF THEIR POWER.
IT'S NOT A PHYSICAL OBJECT. THINK OF IT AS LIFE FORCE.
IT MAY INHABIT DIFFERENT BEINGS, BUT IT NEVER TRULY VANISHES.

THOSE GIRLS... THEY STILL EXIST WITHIN YOU.
...THOSE SOULS...
IT EXISTS WITHIN THE GENES OF THOSE LINKED THROUGH TIME.
SO EVEN IF THOSE UNRULY ABILITIES ARE LOST...
... THAT'S RIGHT.
SO YOU'VE REALIZED IT.
BEYOND JUST FORCED TERMINATION AND REVIVAL...THEY COULD WORK ON NON-SEKIREI TOO...?
BADUM
...SO THAT MEANS..... NO...
THE JINKI...
BADUM
BADUM
...WOULD ALSO BE VERY WELL WITHIN THE REALM OF POSSIBILITY...
MASS GENOCIDE ☆ ON AN UNSPEAKABLE SCALE...
DOES SHE EVEN REALIZE HOW CRAZY THAT IS?
WHOAAA!

Chapter 115: Wings of Determination

AN UNSPEAK-ABLE SCALE...
...MASS GENOCIDE ...?
BIG BROTHER!
WHAT'S "MASS GENOCIDE"?
UMM... MASS GENOCIDE ...
...IS WHEN SOMEONE TAKES THE LIVES OF A VERY, VERY LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE...

WOW, THAT'S IMPRESSIVE!
IT'S NOTHING TO BE SO EXCITED ABOUT, MUSUBI!!
AND WHAT OF THAT SEKIREI WHO RESEMBLED YOU?
SHE GOT THE JUMP ON HER COMRADES IN ORDER TO B-BOND WITH THEIR ASHIKABI... HOW SNEAKY OF HER!!
KU-FU-FU-FU. IT'S LIKE A SOAP OPERA!
YOU GUYS, SERIOUSLY? CAN'T EVEN BEHAVE AT A TIME LIKE THIS.....?
OHHH, PLEASE. LOVING WITH ALL ONE'S HEART IS IMPORTANT IN ANY ERA! ♡
!?
MINATO-SAN! ♡

KU-FU-FU-FU. BY THE WAY, MINA-TAN...
LET'S JUST SAY YOU'VE EXCEEDED MY DATA ON YOU... KU-FU-KU-FU-KU-FU.
WHY'RE YOU ALL...?
IT'S LIKE I EXPLAINED BEFORE, MINA-TAN!
HOLD ON—
WH—
AND NO. 00 OVER THERE SERVES AS A MEDIUM TO STRENGTHEN THE BOND.
WE'VE ACTUALLY BEEN HERE THE WHOLE TIME!
THAT'S WHY THIS PHENOMENON IS HAPPENING RIGHT NOW.
ASHIKABI AND SEKIRE! ARE BOUND TELEPATHI-CALLY...
...!
WAAAAH!

—!!
STAND
Wagtail
...NO.
...A DREAM ...?
...HUH ...?
IT WAS NO DREAM.
EVERY-THING YOU SAW WAS REAL.
THEY HAVE LIFE-AND-DEATH POWER OVER SEKIREI.
THEY CAN ALTER AN ASHIKABI'S VERY DESTINY.
THEY REPRESENT UNFATH-OMABLE DESPAIR.
...BUT ALSO...
...A SMALL... VERY SMALL GLIMMER OF HOPE.
SUCH ARE THE JINKI.

...MIYA-TAN...
YOU'VE... FINALLY EXPLAINED EVERYTHING ABOUT THE JINKI TO US...
I SAW... MINATO'S... UM...
IF THEY NEVER EXISTED, THEN THAT *INCIDENT* WOULDN'T HAVE...
...THEN TAKEHITO-TAN NEVER WOULD'VE...
DON'T SPEAK OF IT.
...DON'T SPEAK OF IT...
... MATSU...
L...
...LAND-LADY...?
...OH, THERE'S ONE MORE THING...
...I'M CURIOUS ABOUT.
THE SEKIREI SAHASHI SAW IN THAT *VISION*...

WHAT WAS THAT POWER?
EVEN WITH JUST A BRIEF GLIMPSE OF BATTLE, I COULD FEEL IT.
THOSE GIRLS WERE STRONG!
ON AN ENTIRELY DIFFERENT LEVEL FROM US.
THEY WERE ALL SO AMAZING!
"GROW!" ♡
ABOUT THAT...
THAT'S BECAUSE WE'VE ALL BEEN MODIFIED BY MBI.
THE CURRENT GENERATION OF SEKIREI ALL HAVE LIMITERS WITHIN THEM.
MOST LIKELY...
...WHAT WE JUST SAW WERE SEKIREI IN OUR RAW FORM.

BUT EVEN THOSE LIMITERS... WITH THE JINKI'S HELP...
...THE SHACKLES COULD BE THROWN OFF.
NOW, SHALL WE BEGIN?
A NEW MYTHOLOGY...
A TOUCHING WAR EPIC...
THE POWERS OF THE GODS OF OLD...THAT WORLD OF LEGENDS...
...WOULD BE REBORN, HERE IN TEITO...!
FEROCIOUS SEKIRE! WOULD BECOME EVEN MORE FEROCIOUS.
WHY'M I YOUR EXAMPLE?
AND NO-GOOD SEKIRE! WOULD— WELL, YOU GET IT.
IT'S NOT NO GOOD. IT'S KUNO...!
YOU SHOULD COLLECT ALL THE JINKI!
THEN WE'LL BE ABLE TO SEE U-CHAN AGAIN!
HEY, BIG BROTHER.
JINKI...
WORLD...OF LEGENDS...

U-CHAN AND CHIHO-CHAN...
...WILL BE TOGETHER AGAIN!
UZUME-SAN...
...WE KNOW HOW DANGEROUS THESE ARE.
BUT, THAT SAID...
...IN ORDER TO PROTECT EVERYONE, I HAVE TO KEEP HAVING EVERYONE FIGHT...
SO THERE'S NO WAY I'M HANDING ANY OVER TO HEARTLESS PEOPLE.
SO PLEASE ...
KU WILL TRY HARD TOO.
HEY, HEY!
RUB
なでなで...

...BUT...
I KNOW IT SEEMS LIKE A CONTRADICTION, BUT...
IT'S A PARA-DOX.
I'LL PROTECT YOU.
I'LL...
I'LL PROTECT YOU ALL.
SO PLEASE FIGHT ALONGSIDE M—

OF COURSE!
MUSU-BIII!
HOPING TO GET THE JUMP ON US AS WE LOOK ON?
KU TOO! KU TOO!
OHHH, BIG SIS TOO.
KU-FU-KU-FU. JUST LIKE A SOAP OPERA...!
YOU GUYS ARE THE VERY DEFINITION OF "TENSION"...

OVER TIME, THEY'VE COME TO CONTROL THE DESTINY OF TEITO...NO, OF ALL PEOPLE.
THE "KUSHIMITAMA" I DREW FROM WITHIN AME-NO-IWAFUNE...
FOUR JINKI REMAIN—
WHAT DRIVES THEM TO FIGHT?
THE ASHIKABI WHO SEEK THE JINKI...
...AND THEIR SEKIREI.
THIS NEW MYTHOLOGY .....!
THE FATE OF HUMANITY.
THE BATTLE'S END.
I'LL OVERSEE IT ALL...
NOW, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.
WHAT SAY WE RESUME THE THIRD PHASE?

Chapter 116: Resuming

Chapter 116: Resuming

KEEP OUT

.....I HAVE NO EXCUSE.
WORK UP THE COST OF THE DAMAGES.
SEND THE BILL TO MBI...
HEH...
... WHAT A HARSH BREAK-UP.
I NEVER EXPECTED SUCH VIOLENCE FROM HER.
THE DEMON... I MEAN, YUKARI SAHASHI...
THANK-FULLY, THE SMALL FIRE WAS CONTAINED, BUT...
DESPITE THE DAMAGE, SHE SOMEHOW GOT AWAY UNHARMED.
I SAW HER FLEE WITH NO. 107 BEFORE MY VERY EYES.
.....NO.
SEND IT TO CEO MINAKA HIMSELF.

.....SOME "CONFERENCE." JUST A CHANCE FOR THOSE GEEZERS TO GRUMBLE AT ME.
MEANWHILE, MY BUILDING IS SET ON FIRE, AND MY BRIDE ESCAPES.
I'VE NOW LOST FOUR SEKIREI.
OUR PATIENT WAS STOLEN FROM MY HOSPITAL, AND NO. 10 HAS CEASED FUNCTIONING ...
THEY DON'T MUCH LIKE BEING RUN ROUGH-SHOD BY THE COM-PANY'S UPSTART HEIR.
THE OLD FOOLS ON THE BOARD HAVE THEIR KNICKERS IN A TWIST.
SAME AS ALWAYS.
.....
...WHAT OF THE CONFERENCE AT HEAD-QUARTERS?
JUST HURRY UP AND BRING US THAT COMPANY'S SECRETS!!
SEKIREI PROJECT? TEITO BEING SEALED OFF? UTTER NONSENSE.
HOW LONG ARE WE GOING TO KEEP UP THIS TOUGH-GUY ACT TO MBI!?
BLAM
JOLT
...SHIT!
...FIRST THING I'LL DO IS TERMINATE THE LOT OF THEM...!!
ONCE I GET THOSE JINKI...
BASTARDS DON'T KNOW WHEN TO ROLL OVER AND DIE...!

VRRM
VRRM
VRRM
...HIGA-SAMA...!
SNAP
PARDON ME, MY PHONE IS...
...A TEXT...?
PERFECT TIMING.
KAKI-ZAKI...
...RESEARCH THE REMAINING ASHIKABI IN THIS PHASE.
LET'S SHOW THEM...
...THAT WE'RE ON A MUCH HIGHER LEVEL THAN THOSE BRATS. PLAYTIME IS OVER.
Sender:
Hiroto Minato
My dear Ashikabi!
Let's get this fourth round started!

ACHOO!
SNIFFLE
COME ON, MIKOGAMI.
AGAIN? YOU HAVE TO STOP PLAYING VIDEO GAMES WITHOUT DRYING YOUR HAIR FIRST.
GEEZ...YOU WOULDN'T EVEN NOTICE IF YOU DID CATCH COLD.
RUB
RUB
ALMOST CAUGHT EVERY MONSTER THERE IS.
YEAH, BUT I'M ALMOST DONE WITH THIS GAME.
TIME FOR BED.
CLICK
ACK.
WHAT'RE YOU DOING?
WELL, GUESS IT'S OKAY. I DID SAVE, AFTER ALL.
IF I GET ALL THE JINKI...
...YOU THINK NO. 43 AND NO. 38 CAN COME BACK?
...HEY, MUTSU.

...THOUGHT YOU DIDN'T LIKE USELESS THINGS?
RIGHT. I HATE THEM.
ESPECIALLY WHEN THEY GO OFF AND LOSE AND LEAVE ME FOREVER.
I REALLY HATE THOSE TYPES.
.....
MUTSU.
YOU WON'T LEAVE ME, RIGHT, MUTSU?

WE'RE THE PLAYABLE CHARACTERS IN A VIDEO GAME.

AND YOU'RE THE ONE WITH THE CONTROLLER IN HAND.

THAT MEANS OUR FATES ARE RIDING ON YOU.

AS LONG AS YOU'RE UP TO IT...AS LONG AS YOU KEEP GRIPPING THAT CONTROLLER...
...YOUR SEKIREI WILL BE WITH YOU FOREVER.

OKAY.
RIGHT, SO...
IF I WIN THIS "GAME" AND GET ALL THE JINKI...

...THEN I CAN TRANSFORM THE WHOLE WORLD INTO A VIDEO GAME, JUST THE WAY I WANT IT, RIIIIIIGHT?
THEN ALL THE TERMINATED SEKIREI WILL BE MINE!!
...HEY.
HEY, MIKOGAMI, CAN YOU AT LEAST TRY LISTENING TO PEOPLE WHEN THEY TALK?
IT SEEMS!
...WILL BE ME!
THE ONLY ONE HOLDING THE CONTROLLER ...
IT'S ABOUT THE FOURTH ROUND.
FROM CEO MINAKA.
WHAT IS IT?
.....
OH, A TEXT.
-RING-
-RING-
BUT WHAT'S THIS MEAN .....?

CLEANING, CLEANING! ♡
THE BATH? AGAIN?
HA-HA... "RIGHT TOOL FOR THE JOB," IS IT?
WE'LL SAVE ON THE WATER BILL. ♡
YOU'RE IN CHARGE OF THE BATH, TSUKIUMI-SAN. ♡
MINATO-SAAAN, CAN YOU WASH THE WINDOWS ON THE SECOND FLOOR?
CREAK

VROOM
VROOM
!?
REV
REV
WH—
WHAT?
AS IF SHE MIGHT COME BACK HOME ANY DAY NOW.
LET'S KEEP UZUME-SAN'S ROOM NICE AND CLEAN TOO.
VROOM
HMPH. SO THIS...
...IS "IZUMO INN"?

VROOM
THE NORTHERN HANNYA...
...AND THE NORTHERN ASHIKABI'S HIDEOUT.
I'M IN THE MIDDLE OF CLEANING THE BATH.
SPLASH
BUH!
NOISE POLLUTION IN A PUBLIC PLACE IS THE HEIGHT OF RUDENESS!
TSU-TSUKI-UMI!!

S—
SORRY ...
I SEE...
SO THIS IS HOW YOU GREET PEOPLE UP HERE IN THE NORTH...
...!
SA—
EEP!
WELL, NISHI SANADA ...
GET READY TO RUMBLE !!
...ISN'T ONE TO BACK DOWN FROM A FIGHT!
SANADA OF THE WEST !?
EEEEEK !?

Chapter 117: The Three Ashikabi

...SO YOU'RE THE NORTHERN ASHIKABI, HUH?
Y—
YES.
TWITCH
THE WEST-ERN...
...ASHI-KABI .....
NICE SNEAK ATTACK ON ME THERE...
...FOR A GUY WITH SUCH A WIMPY FACE!
THE UNBELIEVABLE IMAGE THAT COMES TO MIND FROM THE FIRST ROUND

SHAKE
TREMBLE
SHAKE
TREMBLE
S-SORRY...
SO SORRY...
OH MY...
YOU'RE SOAKING WET! WHATEVER SHALL WE DO?
NOW, WHAT'S ALL THIS COMMOTION?
JUMP
N—
NO, LAND-LADY.
STAY BACK...
LAND... LADY...?
... LA...
!?
SMILE
DO YOU HAVE SOME BUSINESS WITH IZUMO INN?
HISS

WOWEE!
THIS TEA SURE IS TASTY! ♡
WHY'S SANADA OF THE WEST SITTING HERE DRINKING TEA LIKE IT'S NOTHING??
Y-YOU'VE GOT ME. I HAVE NO IDEA EITHER...
U-FU-FU-FU. BEAUTIFUL? NO, STOP.
TEA BREWED UP BY A BEAUTIFUL WIDOW IS OUT OF THIS WORLD! ♡
SIP
I'M TERRIBLY SORRY ONE OF MY GIRLS GOT YOU ALL WET.
MINA-TAN, MINA-TAN.
PLEASE, TAKE YOUR TIME! ♡
LET ME GET SOME TEA CAKES. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.

BLOW
HE DOESN'T HAVE HIS SEKIREI WITH HIM.
DOESN'T SEEM LIKE HE'S HERE TO FIGHT...
AH... UMM...
S-SANADA OF THE WEST... SAN!
I'M SO SORRY WE GOT YOU WET...! REALLY SORRY.
TENSE
OR MAYBE JUST THE MATURE SET...?
BUT HE'S INTO WIDOWS? THAT'S A LITTLE CREEPY.
MATURE?
MATSU-SAAAN.
I CAN HEAR YOUUU.
EEP.
I'M GUESSING... YOU KNEW WE WOULD BE HERE...?
BUT... UM...
WHY'RE YOU HERE?

THAT BASTARD. SHOWING UP LATE, I GUESS.
"THAT GUY" ...?
HERE YOU ARE.
NO WAY HE COULD'VE MEANT THIS CHARMING, PRETTY WIDOW!
OOH, THANKS! ♡♡
AND SPOUTING LIES ABOUT A SCARY, THOUSAND-YEAR-OLD HAG OF A HANNYA LANDLADY IN THE NORTH.
HUH?
YOU MEAN THAT GUY DIDN'T TELL YOU ABOUT IT?
WAIT.
THEN "THAT GUY" MUST BE...
HEYA.
MIYA-CHAAAN, GOT SOME GRUB FOR ME?

SMASH
GAH.
HAG!?
I DIDN'T SAY THAT. I'D NEVER SAY THAT!
THOUGH IT MIGHT'VE SLIPPED THAT YOU'RE OVER A THOUSAND YEARS OLD...
WOW.
THAT PICKLING STONE WENT FLYING THROUGH THE AIR!!
KAORU-SAAAN, WHO IS THIS "HANNYA HAG" YOU APPARENTLY MENTIONED...?
SMASH
GYAAAH!
THAT'S EVEN WORSE!
SO STRONG...! I THINK I'M IN LOVE...!!
WHAT!?
...QUIT WHILE YOU'RE AHEAD.
SHE'S ONLY GOT EYES FOR HER DEAD HUSBAND.

HE'S ON A WHOLE 'NOTHER LEVEL OF STUPID.
WHOA...
THAT'S JUST HOW LOVE IS!
WHAAAAT!?
EVEN BETTER!!
PLAYING HARD TO GET, THEN?
RIGHT. SURE.
HUH? OH.
...WHY DON'T YOU GO AHEAD AND ASK WHY THEY'RE HERE?
...SAHA-SHI.
I CAN SEE THAT YOU'RE TOTALLY ENTRANCED BY THIS NONSENSE, BUT...
I'VE GOT AN EARNEST REQUEST FOR YOU GUYS.
R-REQUEST ...?
NO CLUE. THIS JERK CALLED ME OVER.
OH. RIGHT.
UM...
S-SO, SEO-SAN..... AND SANADA... SAN.
WHY'RE YOU TWO HERE?

I BROUGHT US TOGETHER TO CONVINCE YOU TWO OF SOMETHING.
IS THE BATH ALL CLEAN, TSUKIUMI-SAAAN?
OF COURSE THAT'S WHY I CHANGED CLOTHING!
WE'LL THANK YOU NOT TO SCHEDULE MEETINGS AT THE HOMES OF OTHERS.
THAT'S WHY I HAD THIS DUMBASS MEET ME HERE TOO.
PROBABLY NO NEED FOR RE-INTRODUCTIONS, BUT THIS GUY'S THE WESTERN ASHIKABI— NISHI SANADA.
HE'S ROUGH AROUND THE EDGES AND DUMB AS HELL, BUT HE'S NOT A BAD DUDE.
WHO THE HELL'S DUMB AS HELL?
THE REASON I THOUGHT WE THREE ASHIKABI SHOULD MEET NOW...
IT'S OBVIOUS, ISN'T IT?
THE MESSAGE FROM MBI. YOU TWO...
...GOT IT TOO, YEAH?
...
YEAH.

Let's get this fourth round started!
Let's get this fourth round started!
Let's get this fourth round started!

"LET'S GET THIS FOURTH ROUND STARTED!
...THE MESSAGE AND TIME STAMPS ARE ALL THE SAME.
"MY DEAR ASHIKABI!

"...AND EACH ONE REPRESENTS A CHANCE FOR YOU TO BE WITH YOUR SEKIREI FOREVER.
"WHY? BECAUSE THERE ARE FOUR JINKI LEFT...
"BUT I'M HOPING YOU'LL ALL JOIN THE FUN, MY DEAR ASHIKABI.
"IT'S OPEN ENROLLMENT THIS TIME.

"WE SINCERELY HOPE THAT TEN DAYS AFTER RECEIVING THIS MESSAGE...
"...YOU'LL ALL SHOW UP AT TEITO HARBOR'S MBI TERMINAL WITH YOUR LITTLE BIRDIES.
"JUST TO BE CLEAR—IT'S YOUR CHOICE TO PARTICIPATE OR NOT THIS ROUND.
"NO ONE IS FORCING YOU.
"I'LL BE WAITING FOR YOU!
"SINCERELY, HIROTO MINAKA!"

AND I THINK "OPEN ENROLLMENT" IS HIS ROUNDABOUT WAY OF SAYING WE ACTUALLY ARE BEING FORCED TO JOIN.
THAT BASTARD MINAKA, ALWAYS KEEPING THINGS GOOD AND MYSTERIOUS.
BESIDES THE PLACE AND TIME, THERE'RE NO REAL DETAILS. IT'S A PRETTY CRYPTIC MESSAGE...
M-ME...
I'M GOING TOO. SEEMS INTERESTING.
HOW ABOUT YOU TWO? YES OR NO?
IT SOUNDS ANNOYING, BUT I'M IN.
ME TOO... I'LL GO.
THERE'S A REASON WHY I HAVE TO.

HEY... SEO-SAN.
NOOGIE NOOGIE
LOOKS LIKE YOU'VE GROWN SOME BALLS SINCE THE LAST TIME WE MET, KID.
OUCH. OWW.
OH REALLY ...?
BUT WE DON'T KNOW WHAT MBI'S UP TO, SO WE CAN'T GET CARELESS...
IN FACT, SINCE THERE'S ONLY SO MUCH WE CAN DO ALONE...
.....I'M THINKING...
FOR THIS FOURTH ROUND...
...WHY DON'T WE TEAM UP?

WHOOSH

THE FOURTH ROUND.
A PLACE WHERE ALL THE ASHIKABI'RE GONNA SHOW...
LOOKS LIKE THIS MIGHT FINALLY BE OUR CHANCE, SHIINA!
YES.

NO. 108...
THIS TIME, WE'RE GONNA FIND HER FOR SURE!
NO. 108, AT THAT VERY MOMENT
YOWCH!
CHOMP
CHOMP
I WASN'T TEASING HIM, I SWEAR!
GET OFFA HIM?
KU-CHAN...
GET OFFA BIG BROTHER!

Chapter 118: The Fourth Round

THIS IS TEITO HARBOR'S MBI TERMINAL.
W-W-WE'RE HERE.
THE FOURTH ROUND THOUGH...
WH-WHAT'LL WE DO, HARI...!?
HEY! YOU'RE...
...KUNI-MITSU-KUN! THAT'S YOU, ISN'T IT?
HARI...
WE'VE MADE IT THIS FAR.
I'M SURE WE'LL BE FINE THIS TIME TOO.
BEEN A WHILE. LAST SAW YOU IN THE FIRST PHASE, RIGHT?
GOOD TO SEE A FAMILIAR FACE!
OH—
MUTOU-KUN!?
...HUH?
DIDN'T YOU HAVE A SECOND SEKIREI, MUTOU-KUN?

IT WAS THIS BASTARD NAMED HIMURA ...!
HIS SEKIREI WAS JUST WAY TOO STRONG.
HELLO THERE, NINA-SAN. ♡
..... HELLO, HARI-SAN...
YEAH. THAT WAS MIMI.
SHE GOT TAKEN OUT DURING THE SECOND PHASE...
OH... I SEE...
HIMURA !?
HE ACTUALLY CAME TO SEE ME, ONCE.
ASKED ME TO JOIN HIM IN ESCAPING TEITO.
I DIDN'T LIKE THE GUY, SO I REFUSED...
YOU MADE THE RIGHT CHOICE.
EVERYONE WHO TRIED ESCAPING WITH HIM...
...WERE DONE IN BY THE DISCI-PLINARY SQUAD.
WHAT!?
D-D-DISCI-PLINARY SQUAD ...!?
SHHH. KEEP IT DOWN.
I HEARD THEY EVEN SHOWED UP IN THE THIRD ROUND.
MUTTER
YEAH.
WHISPER
THE DISCIPLINARY SQUAD..."MBI'S DOGS," RIGHT? THEY SAY IF YOU RUN INTO THAT BEASTLY GROUP, IT'S CURTAINS FOR YOU...
MUTTER
IF THEY GET SERIOUS IN A FIGHT, YOU'RE PRETTY MUCH OUT OF THE GAME...
THEN THERE'S THOSE "EAST," "SOUTH," AND "WEST" GUYS.
WE'RE SURE TO RUN INTO SOME TOUGH CUSTOMERS SOON.
AND SPEAKING OF TOUGH...
THOSE LIGHT-NING TWINS.
MY MIMI TOLD ME ABOUT THEM. THEY WENT AROUND CHASING UNWINGED SEKIREI... A PAIR OF OGRES THAT WOULDN'T QUIT.
UN-WINGED !?
WHOA. THAT'S PRETTY BRUTAL...

☆MENTAL IMAGE
THEIR ASHIKABI'S SOME GUY NAMED "SEO."
THOSE BRUTAL SEKIREI THEMSELVES SAY, "IT'S BEEN NOTHING BUT HARDSHIP SINCE WE WERE WINGED."
AND, "HE'S THE WORST OF THE WORST ASHIKABI!"
WHOA... HOW BAD COULD THIS ASHIKABI BE...?
ALSO... LOOK, THERE THEY ARE.
THAT ASHIKABI AND SEKIREI TEAM.
IT'S SEKIREI NO. 87, KAHO, AND HER ASHIKABI, ORIHIKO OOSUMI.
I'VE HEARD THEY'RE PRETTY DAMN STRONG TOO...

☆ MENTAL IMAGE
A LITTLE GIRL!? A MAN!?
WOW ...
SIX!?
HE'S APPARENTLY GOT SIX SEKIREI UNDER HIM.
RUMOR HAS IT THERE'S ONE WITH GIANT BOOBS, A LITTLE GIRL, AND EVEN A MAN.
THE NORTH-ERN ASHI-KABI.
AND DON'T FORGET THE RECENT RISING STAR.
.....I JUST HOPE HE DOESN'T SHOW UP HERE.
AN UNMATCHED ASHIKABI WHO'D EVEN WING A MALE SEKIREI...
WE'D BETTER WATCH OUR BUTTS.
YEAH.
DON'T REALLY WANNA THINK ABOUT IT...
HOPE HE STAYS HOME.
..... RIGHT.
THE WORST OF THEM ALL... WOULD BE THAT PAIR.....
BUT..... .....
.....I KNOW THE ONES...
YEAH.
THE DEMON AND REAPER.
☆ MENTAL IMAGE

THEY'VE TERMINATED COUNTLESS SEKIREI...
...AND SENT THEIR ASHIKABI TO THE HOSPITAL...
I HEARD IT STRAIGHT FROM A FORMER ASHIKABI NAMED TANIGAWA.
IT WASN'T JUST HIS SEKIREI. THEY EVEN STRIPPED HIM NAKED!
OH, I HEARD ABOUT THAT TOO.
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
TREMBLE
IF YOU CAN'T PROVIDE ANY INFO, THEN THEY KICK THE CRAP OUTTA YOU.....
THE DEMON AND REAPER ARE SEARCHING FOR SOMEONE IN TEITO, THEY SAY.
WHOA ...
LIKE AN OCCULT URBAN LEGEND AT THIS POINT.
...THEY'RE THE LAST ONES I WANNA RUN INTO...
...YEP...
WE'RE JUST ORDINARY, POWERLESS ASHIKABI WHO DON'T REALLY LIKE FIGHTING.

YOU DON'T THINK THEY'LL COME THIS TIME, SURELY ...?
YOU EVER MEET THEM, KUNIMITSU-KUN?
HELL NO! OF COURSE NOT!
DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THEY LOOK LIKE...
SO...YOU WOULDN'T KNOW THEM BY SIGHT...
I ONLY KNOW THE RUMORS, MYSELF.
OH, YOU HEAR ABOUT THE FIRE IN THAT SKYSCRAPER IN THE EAST, THE OTHER DAY?
TH-THAT WHOLE SECTION OF THE CITY WAS SHUT DOWN TO TRAFFIC.
THAT WAS THE DEMON ASHIKABI'S DOING...
S-SERIOUSLY!?
WHOA... WHOA...
BY THE WAY... KUNIMITSU-KUN...
...DID "HE" CONTACT YOU?
"HE"...HUH? YOU TOO, MUTOU-KUN?
THOSE TWO OVER THERE ALSO GOT A CALL.
SAFE TO SAY NEARLY EVERYONE HERE WAS CONTACTED...
EVERY-ONE...
I'M HONESTLY NOT SURE HOW TO RESPOND.....
HOW ABOUT YOU, KUNIMITSU-KUN? YOU TRUST HIM?
I-IF YOU DO, MUTOU-KUN, THEN I WILL TOO...
IS THIS PLACE THE MBI TERMINAL?
HEY THERE. 'SCUSE MEEE!
HUH?
UH, YES.
BADUM

GREAT. THOUGHT SO!

D—
D...
IS HER SEKIREI A GIRL OR A BOY?
CUTE EITHER WAY...
NEVER SEEN A GIRL ONE BEFORE...
AN ASHIKABI? RIGHT...?
...!?
AAAAH!
...D—
THE DEMON...
...AND REAPER!!

IT'S THE DEMON AND...
...REAPER!?
IT'S THE DEMON!
EEK...
HUUUH?
THE DEMON, SHE'LL...
SHE'LL STOMP ON OUR FAMILY JEWELS!
DEMON AND REAPER!
THIS IS... BAD.
WHOA..
WAAAAH!

HEY.
YOU GUYS KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT NO. 108...?
EEEK!
SHE'S GONNA STRIP US NAKED!
SHE'S GONNA STOMP ON US DOWN THERE!
WAAAAH!
I DON'T WANNA BE MADE IMPOTENT AT SUCH A YOUNG AGE!
NOOO!
RUN AWAY!
KYAAH!
THE HELL...? HOW RUDE.
ANY SIGN OF NO. 108, SHIINA?
SHE WASN'T AMONG THOSE WHO JUST RAN AWAY...
This is an official announcement from MBI.
Boarding preparations are complete.
All Ashikabi and Sekirei—please board the craft you see before you.
GET ON THE BOAT, HUH?
LET'S GO, SHIINA.
YES.

Wagtail

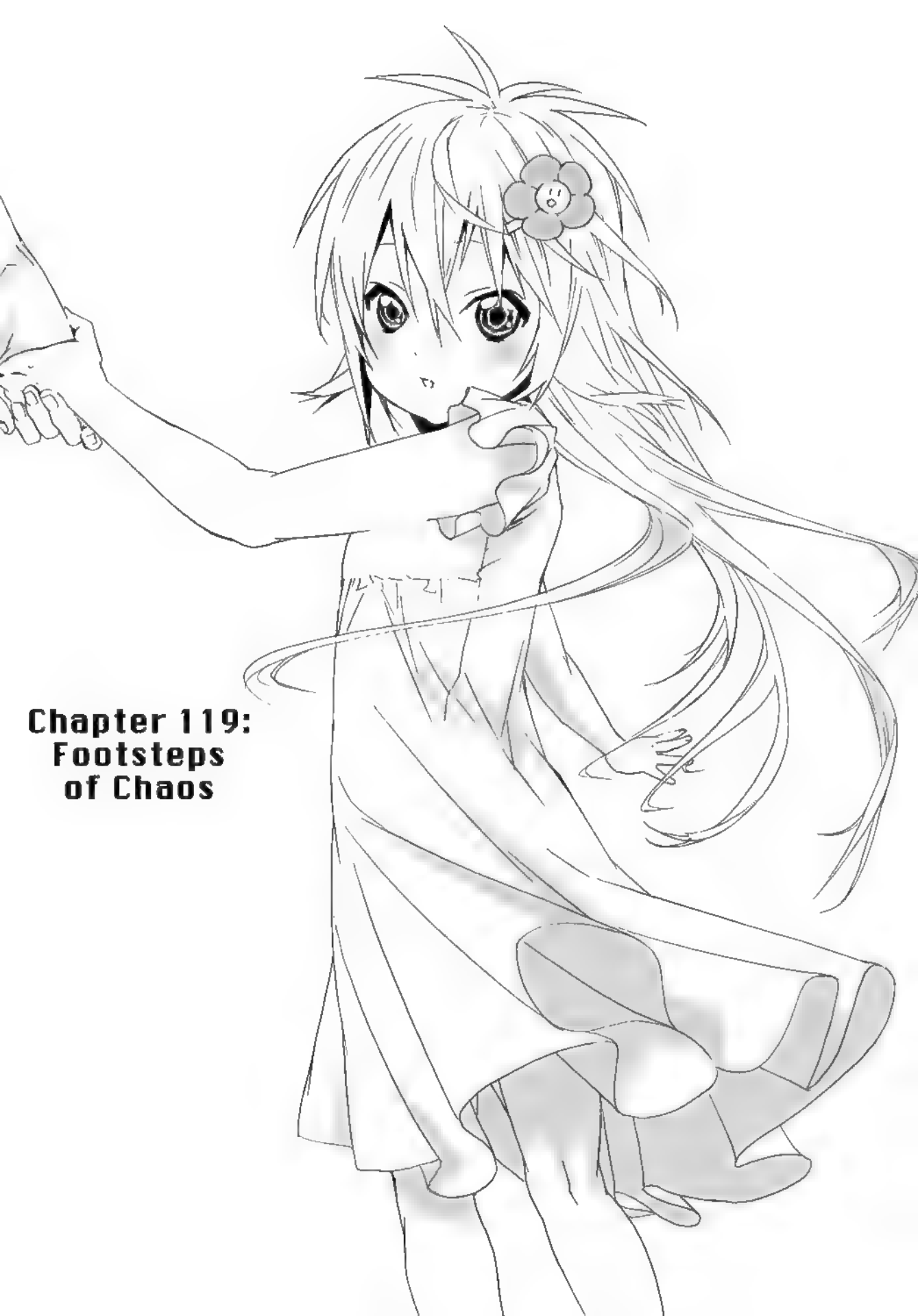
WAAAH!
KYAAH!
?
SOME KIND OF UPROAR?
RUN AWAY!
WAAH!
UMM...
WH-WHAT HAPPENED OVER THERE?
TH-THE DEMON AND REAPER ARE HERE!

YO, SAHASHI!
YOU'D BETTER RUN TOO—
SEO!?
SHOCK
SEO-SAN!
SORRY, MAN.
I OVER-SLEPT.
YOU'RE LATE.
WELL, MORE LIKE THESE TWO KEPT ME UP ALL NIGHT, IF YOU KNOW WHAT I MEAN...!
STOP THAT! NOT IN FRONT OF CHILDREN.
WHA...?
SEO!!
CRACKLE
CRACKLE
SEO-SAN...
VROOM
NICE! WE MADE IT!
VROOM

NISHI SANADA-SAMA IS HERE.
NORTH ASHI-KABI!
YEAH... I'M MINATO SAHASHI.
"SEO"...! "SANADA OF THE WEST" .....!!
TH-THAT MAKES YOU...
THE HELL ...?
CRACKLE
WH—
WHOAA!
HOLD ON... WHO'RE YOU...?
MASTER!
NO WAY!
NO WAY, NO WAY, NO WAY!!
NO WAY WE'RE FIGHTING GUYS LIKE THAT!!
HIROYUKI KUNIMITSU AND HIS SEKIREI, PLUS FOUR OTHER PAIRS, WITHDREW FROM THE FOURTH ROUND

FOR THIS FOURTH ROUND...
...WHY DON'T WE TEAM UP?
TEAM UP WITH YOU, SEO-SAN...?
DOESN'T SOUND LIKE A BAD PLAN.
I'M TALKING ABOUT UNITING HERE.
THAT IDIOT'S TEXT DIDN'T SAY WE COULDN'T.
SO YOU'RE IN, SANADA?
YEAH.
THE MORE THE MERRIER IN A FESTIVAL LIKE THIS!
SEO-TAN, SEO-TAN.
I'M AFRAID THERE'S A RATHER OBVIOUS PROBLEM WITH YOUR PLAN.
FESTI-VAL...
IN THE THIRD ROUND...
WE WERE BASICALLY TOLD TO SLAUGHTER EACH OTHER...
THERE'D BE LITTLE USE IN TEAMING UP, IN THAT CASE...!
YEAH...I THOUGHT OF THAT TOO.
IF IT'S A RACE TO THE FINISH, LIKE IN THE FIRST ROUND, THEN FINE, BUT...

I KNOW.
WE CAN JUST PLAY DEAD! ♡
M-MUSUBI-CHAN... WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT A BEAR ATTACK HERE...
AND YOU'RE NOT ACTUALLY SUPPOSED TO PLAY DEAD WHEN UP AGAINST A BEAR...
OOH.
PLAY DEAD! ♡
WAIT... MINA-TAN.
MAYBE...
...THERE ACTUALLY IS SOMETHING TO THAT.



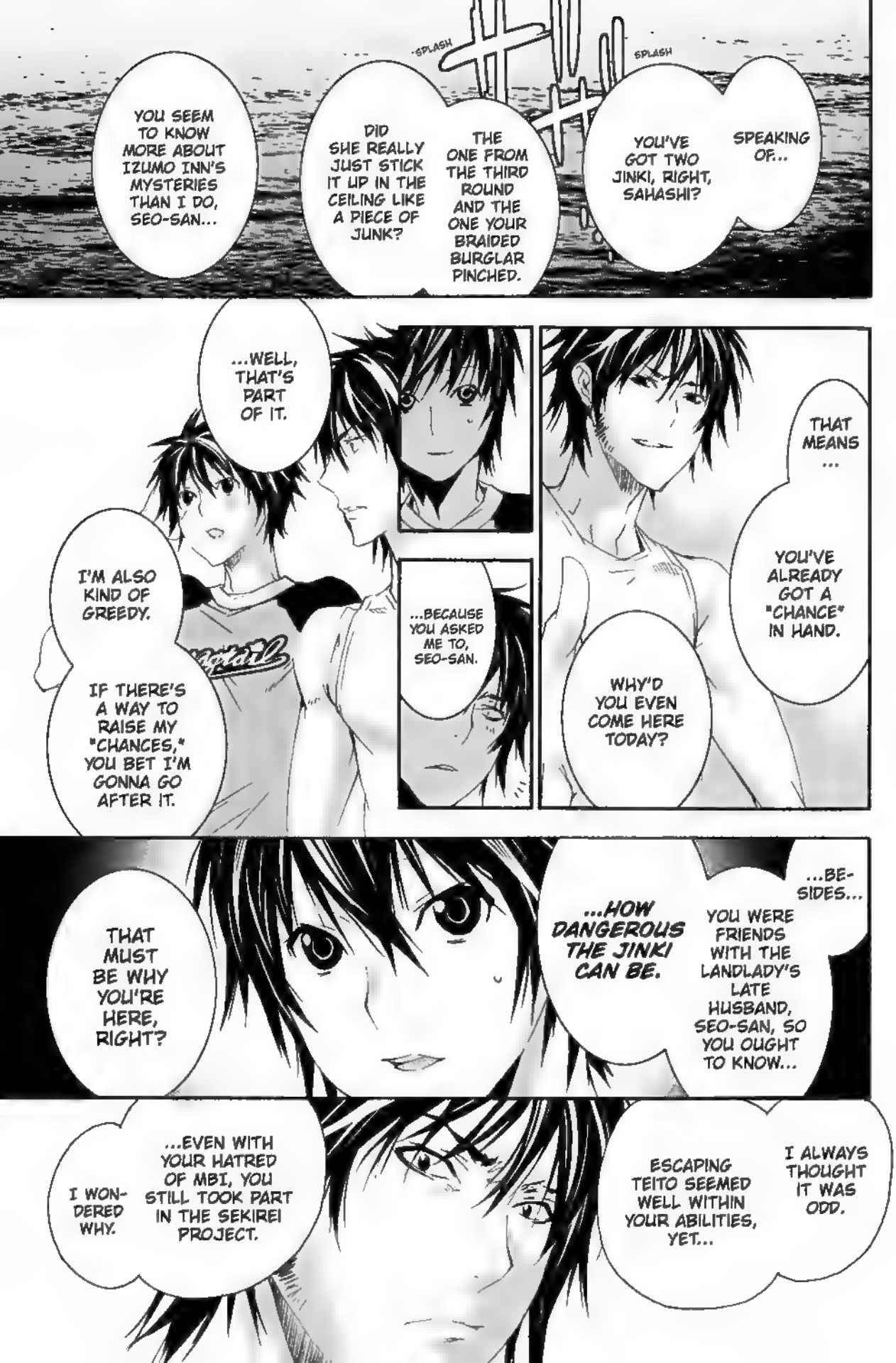
Chapter 119: Footsteps of Chaos

To all Ashikabi and Sekirei gathered at MBI Terminal.
Boarding preparations are complete.
BOARDING PASS? WHAT'S THIS?
BOAT!
TMP
TMP
OH, KU-CHAN!
MUST HAVE...SOME DIGITAL INFO ON IT?
TCH.
I'M NOT CRAZY ABOUT HANGING ON TO ANYTHING MBI GIVES US.
THEY'RE PLOTTING SOME-THING, FOR SURE.
Then, feel free to board MBI's cruise ship, the S.S. Minaka.
Ashikabi— please be sure to receive your boarding passes at the entry gate.

Wagtail

CHATTER
CHATTER
THEY'RE BECOMING FAST FRIENDS... KIDS WILL BE KIDS, I GUESS...
POP
STRUGGLE
Terribly sorry to keep you waiting.
The S.S. Minaka is now casting off.

SHOOK
BESIDES US, I ONLY SAW ONE OTHER ASHIKABI AND SEKIREI PAIR.
I JUST TOOK A QUICK GLANCE AROUND THE SHIP.
YO.
SERI-OUSLY? THAT KID'S NOT HERE?
I WANTED TO PAY HIM BACK FOR THE FIRST ROUND.
PAY HIM BACK!!?
KINDA MAKES SENSE THAT THEY WOULDN'T COME.
NO SIGN OF HIGA OF THE EAST, HIS FOUR-EYED PAL, OR THE BRAT FROM THE SOUTH.
HE LOOKS HAPPY.. I GUESS SANADA-SAN DOESN'T REALLY HAVE A TYPE AFTER ALL...?
REALLY?
THE ASHIKABI WAS A GIRL. THAT'S TWO CUTIES, TOTAL
NICE.
HUH? WHY'S THAT?
LIKE THAT IDIOT'S TEXT SAID, EACH REMAINING JINKI REPRESENTS A "CHANCE" FOR ONE OF US.
PIKA-CHAN, HI-CHAN, SHOOT SOME LIGHTNING! ♡
WHAT? DON'T GET FRIENDLY WITH US!
SOME MOOD AROUND HERE, HUH, HIKARI?
YOU BIG BOOBS
CHATTER
CHATTER
CHATTER
IF WE PUT IT ANOTHER WAY, ANYONE WITH A JINKI ALREADY HAS A "CHANCE."
NO WONDER THEY DON'T FEEL LIKE THROWING THEMSELVES INTO THIS DANGEROUS SITUATION. WE'VE GOT NO CLUE WHAT'S COMING.
SO IT'S LIKE THEY KNOW THAT THEY DON'T KNOW?
BASICALLY, IT'S A GAME OF MUSICAL CHAIRS.
THE PEOPLE WHO'RE ALREADY SEATED DON'T NEED TO TAKE ACTION.
ALL THIS TALK ABOUT CHANCES CAN ONLY POINT TO ONE THING.
SOME-THING'S COMING *AFTER* PHASE THREE...
THOSE GUYS MUST BE ANTICI-PATING THAT.


SPLASH
SPLASH
YOU SEEM TO KNOW MORE ABOUT IZUMO INN'S MYSTERIES THAN I DO, SEO-SAN...
DID SHE REALLY JUST STICK IT UP IN THE CEILING LIKE A PIECE OF JUNK?
THE ONE FROM THE THIRD ROUND AND THE ONE YOUR BRAIDED BURGLAR PINCHED.
YOU'VE GOT TWO JINKI, RIGHT, SAHASHI?
SPEAKING OF...
...WELL, THAT'S PART OF IT.
I'M ALSO KIND OF GREEDY.
IF THERE'S A WAY TO RAISE MY "CHANCES," YOU BET I'M GONNA GO AFTER IT.
...BECAUSE YOU ASKED ME TO, SEO-SAN.
THAT MEANS ...
YOU'VE ALREADY GOT A "CHANCE" IN HAND.
WHY'D YOU EVEN COME HERE TODAY?
THAT MUST BE WHY YOU'RE HERE, RIGHT?
...HOW DANGEROUS THE JINKI CAN BE.
...BESIDES...
YOU WERE FRIENDS WITH THE LANDLADY'S LATE HUSBAND, SEO-SAN, SO YOU OUGHT TO KNOW...
I WONDERED WHY.
...EVEN WITH YOUR HATRED OF MBI, YOU STILL TOOK PART IN THE SEKIREI PROJECT.
ESCAPING TEITO SEEMED WELL WITHIN YOUR ABILITIES, YET...
I ALWAYS THOUGHT IT WAS ODD.

GRIND
GRIND
GRIND
GRIND
GRIND
OW, OWWW!
S-SORRY.
WHERE'D THAT NAIVE, LOVABLE KID GO!?
...TCH.
YOU'RE A GOOD GUY, SEO-SAN.
YOU KNOW HOW SCARY THE JINKI REALLY ARE, SO YOU DON'T WANT THEM FALLING INTO THE HANDS OF ANYONE HEARTLESS..... RIGHT?
I'M PRETTY SURE THAT'S IT.
YOU'RE DAMN RIGHT THOUGH. BUT THEN, WHY'D YOU ONLY BRING ALONG THE PIP-SQUEAK?
...IS BEING BULLIED AGAIN!
OH, BIG BROTHER...
THAT DECISION WAS ALSO TO INCREASE MY "CHANCES"...
...HEH.
I HEAR EAST IS DYING TO GET AHOLD OF THE JINKI.
YOU'RE DEALING WITH THIS MYSTERIOUS FOURTH ROUND, BUT YOU'VE ALSO GOT THE BOARDINGHOUSE TO WORRY ABOUT...
...SO YOU SPLIT YOUR FORCES UP, JUST IN CASE THE BAD GUYS TAKE THIS CHANCE TO ATTACK...?
WELL, I'VE ALSO GOT YOU GUYS HERE, SEO-SAN.
WHAT A LITTLE SCHEMER... NOT SO INNOCENT ANYMORE, HUH?
SO IN THE END...
KNOWING THE DANGER AND KNOWING YOU DON'T WANT THE JINKI GOING TO THEM...
...YOU THOUGHT WE SHOULD HAVE ME, THAT DUMBASS, AND A GOOD-FOR-NOTHIN' ROUNIN STANDING IN THEIR WAY?

LISTEN. MY FRIEND WAS KILLED OVER THE JINKI.
THAT'S REAL DANGER FOR YA.
JUST REMEMBER THAT.
YOUR FRIEND...
THE LANDLADY'S HUSBAND...
TAKEHITO ASAMA-SAN.....
MATSU-SAN...
...SHOULD I REALLY JUST STAND BY AND DO NOTHING?
Hey.
IF NO. 01 TAKES ACTION, SO DOES NO. 04...
CLAK CLAK CLAK
...AND MATSU'S PLENTY SCARED OF THAT HAPPENING.
FU-FU.
IT MUST BE HARD, BEING A STRATE-GIST.

MUSUBI AND FRIENDS ...
...ARE READY AND WAITING!

FWOOM
FWOOM
FWOOM
FWOOM
FWOOM
Ladies and gentle-men!
So sorry for the long wait.
Now...

...THE FOURTH ROUND WILL BEGIN!
AND THIS MARKS...
...THE SEKIREI PROJECT THIRD PHASE'S...
...FINAL ROUND!!!

FINAL ROUND ...!?
Here is your stage—
The S.S. Minaka, out in Teito Harbor!
This ship won't return to land until the fourth round is over.
URGH.
URP.
I USUALLY DON'T HAVE A PROBLEM WITH MOTION SICKNESS, BUT.....
IT'S NO GOOD... BOATS ARE MY ONE WEAKNESS...
ARE YOU OKAY?
LET'S GO ABOVE DECK AND GET YOU SOME FRESH AIR.
WHAT A LET-DOWN...
THIS IS THE INFAMOUS "DEMON AND REAPER" PAIR?

COME AGAIN?
WAY WEAKER-LOOKING THAN I WOULD'VE THOUGHT.
RIGHT, NO. 13?
WELL, SHALL WE GET RIGHT TO IT?
WE'RE GOING TO MAKE THE TITLE OF "DEMON AND REAPER" OURS.

HEY, NATSUO.
I'VE BEEN WONDERING FOR A WHILE...
?
WHY'D YOU BOND WITH BLACK IN THE FIRST PLACE?
DOESN'T LOOK LIKE YOU LOVE EACH OTHER...
DID THE COMPANY ORDER YOU TO, OR WHAT?
HEH HEH...BENI-TSUBASA—YOUR CASE IS MUCH SIMPLER...
YOU'RE OVER THE MOON FOR HIM...
SHUT UP!
LIKE YOU'RE ANY DIFFERENT, BLUE!!
NAH...I JUST HAPPEN TO LIKE NATSUO'S PERSONALITY...
WILL YOU TELL ME?
TELL ME! TELL MEEE!!
HMM.
HOW DO I PUT THIS?

Side Story: The Tale of Black's World

THAT...
...IS THE CEO'S SPECIAL SEAT.
HEY.
YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED UP HERE.

YEAH.
I KNOW.
THINK SOMEONE WOULD DIE IF THEY FELL FROM THIS HEIGHT?
HEY.
...SO HIGH UP HERE.
HIGH... AND SCARY...
...YOU WANNA DIE?
BUT...
I'M A LITTLE LOST, YOU SEE.
...I SEE...
HMM...
CAN'T SAY I'M A FAN OF PAIN THOUGH.

ONE DAY, THEY VOLUNTEERED TO GO TO A COUNTRY AT WAR.
MY LOVE NEVER COULD IGNORE THOSE IN TROUBLE.
A DOCTOR, YOU KNOW?
THERE WAS GUNFIRE. AN ACCIDENT.
I NEVER LEARNED ANY OTHER DETAILS.
THE BONES NEVER EVEN MADE IT HOME.
THE PERSON I LOVED DIED.
...I'M CONSTANTLY HIT WITH THESE WAVES OF DESPAIR.
AND EVEN THOUGH I CAN'T FIGURE OUT WHO TO BLAME...
I DON'T EVEN REALLY HAVE ANY MEMENTOS.
SO IT STILL DOESN'T REALLY FEEL LIKE THEY'RE GONE.
I WAS USED TO MY LOVE ALWAYS RUNNING OFF PLACES EMPTY-HANDED.
AT A WORLD WITHOUT HIM IN IT.
AT THE WORLD THAT STOLE MY LOVE FROM ME.
...NO, THAT'S NOT QUITE IT.
MAYBE I'M JUST ANGRY?

...AH.
I GET THAT.
...THAT'S WHAT THIS FEELING IS.....
.....I SEE. SO...
...IN THAT CASE...
...WHY NOT LEND ME YOUR POWER?
THEN WE CAN TRY DESTROYING IT.
THIS WORLD.
MBI'S SECRET PROJECT, HUH...?
I'VE HEARD ABOUT IT.
GREATER THAN THE GREATEST WEAPONS.
"SEKIREI"...

I WORK IN THE PHARMACEUTICAL BRANCH.
NATSUO.
FU-FU. AWFULLY LIGHT-HEARTED ABOUT IT.
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
SURE, LET'S DO IT.
LET'S DESTROY. DESTROY IT ALL.
YUP. A CONTRACT BETWEEN OUR VERY DNA.
A RITUAL CREATING AN IRRESISTIBLE BOND WITH A SEKIREI.
A CONTRACT?
SO HOW DO WE DESTROY IT ALL?
JUST FORM A CONTRACT WITH ME.
OH, IT'S QUITE SIMPLE.
DO YOU HAVE THE COURAGE...
...TO DO THAT, NATSUO?
YEAH. THERE'S SOMETHING REALLY SCARY ABOUT YOU.
HEH HEH. YOU SURE KNOW HOW TO FLATTER A GIRL.
CAN'T HELP BUT FEEL LIKE I'M BEING BEWITCHED BY THE DEVIL.
...FU-FU. YOU'RE A SCARY ONE.

I LOVE IT.
WHAT'S YOUR NAME...?
...AH, BUT FIRST...
I THINK YOU'LL MAKE A GOOD PARTNER.
...FU-FU.
YOU'RE AN INTERESTING ONE, NATSUO.
...KARASUBA.
... NO. 04...
I'M SEKIREI ...

A BLACK ANGEL.

AND I GAVE HER WINGS.

...UNTIL WE END THIS WORLD.

...OR AT LEAST...

THANKS, NATSUO.

TOGETHER FOREVER.

THANKS, NATSUO.
TOGETHER FOREVER.

A BLACK ANGEL.
AND I GAVE HER WINGS.
...UNTIL WE END THIS WORLD.
...OR AT LEAST...

I WONDER IF I'LL EVENTUALLY COME TO REGRET THIS, ONCE I FALL DOWN INTO HELL...?
OR WILL I JUST LAUGH ABOUT IT...?
WHICH WILL IT BE.....?
HEY, HEY!
TELL ME, NATSUO!
WHY'D YOU BOND WITH BLACK?
NAH. I DON'T FEEL LIKE TELLING YOU.
WHAT?
BUT WHY? WHY?

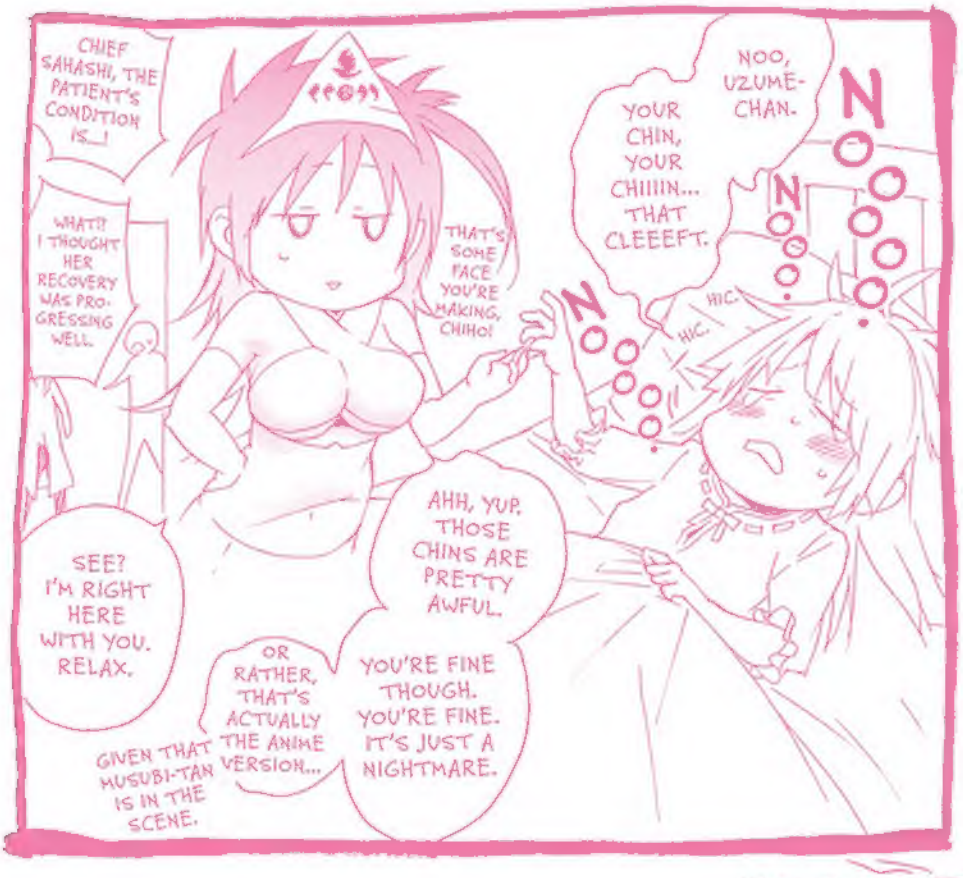
SEE YOU IN VOLUME 13!

NOOOOO-
OOOO-
OOOO-
OOOO
UZUME-
EEEE!!
TAKE CARE OF... CHIHO...
AAAHH!!

THOSE MANLY MEN...

...CAN SHOW UP ANYWHERE...

THE EVER-SPREADING NIGHTMARE...


CHIEF SAHASHI, THE PATIENT'S CONDITION IS...!
WHAT?! I THOUGHT HER RECOVERY WAS PROGRESSING WELL.
THAT'S SOME FACE YOU'RE MAKING, CHIHO!
NOO, UZUME-CHAN.
YOUR CHIN, YOUR CHIIIIN... THAT CLEEEFT.
NOOOOOOOO
HIC.
HIC.
SEE? I'M RIGHT HERE WITH YOU. RELAX.
AHH, YUP. THOSE CHINS ARE PRETTY AWFUL.
OR RATHER, THAT'S ACTUALLY THE ANIME VERSION...
GIVEN THAT MUSUBI-TAN IS IN THE SCENE.
YOU'RE FINE THOUGH. YOU'RE FINE. IT'S JUST A NIGHTMARE.

Translation Notes

COMMON HONORIFICS
no honorific: Indicates familiarity or closeness; if used without permission or reason, addressing someone in this manner would constitute an insult.
-san: The Japanese equivalent of Mr./Mrs./Miss. If a situation calls for politeness, this is the fail-safe honorific.
-sama: Conveys great respect; may also indicate that the social status of the speaker is lower than that of the addressee.
-kun: Used most often when referring to boys, this indicates affection or familiarity. Occasionally used by older men among their peers, but it may also be used by anyone referring to a person of lower standing.
-chan: An affectionate honorific indicating familiarity used mostly in reference to girls; also used in reference to cute persons or animals of either gender.

Page 57 - Minato's wagtail T-shirt
The Japanese wagtail is a common species of bird that prefers freshwater environments. The Japanese name for it, *sekirei*, also happens to be the title of the series.

Page 88 - Takama-ga-hara
In Shinto mythology, this is the place where the gods dwell.

Page 117 - Kuno/No Good
Kuno's name sounds very similar to *munou*, which means "incompetence."

Page 121 - Ame-no-iwafune
In Shinto mythology, a ship made of stone that brought gods down to earth.

Page 135 - *Hannya*
The *hannya* is a classical Noh theater mask that resembles a horned demon. It's also the intimidating "aura" face that often appears behind Miya when she's angry.

Page 136 - Sanada of the West/Nishi Sanada
Sanada's given name, Nishi, means "west," and he's also the Western Ashikabi, hence the pun on his name.

SEKIREI ⑫

Sakurako Gokurakuin

Translation: Caleb D. Cook

Lettering: Phil Christie

This book is a work of fiction. Names, characters, places, and incidents are the product of the author's imagination or are used fictitiously. Any resemblance to actual events, locales, or persons, living or dead, is coincidental.

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First Yen Press eBook Edition: September 2017

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ISBN: 978-0-316-36175-0 (ebook)